The United Nations: Its Origins and Milestones

UN50

1945—1995

الذكرى السنوية الخمسون لإنشاء الأمم المتحدة

联合国五十周年纪念

Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations

Cinquantième Anniversaire de l'Organisation des Nations Unies

Пятидесятая годовщина Организации Объединенных Наций

Cincuentenario de las Naciones Unidas

How It All Began: A Chronology

Inter-Allied Declaration

Signed in London on 12 June 1941, the Inter-Allied Declaration "to work together, with other free peoples, both in war and peace" was the first of a series of steps which led to the establishment of the United Nations.

Atlantic Charter

On 14 August 1941, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt of the United States and Prime Minister Winston Churchill of the United Kingdom proposed a set of principles for international collaboration in maintaining peace and security. The document, signed during a meeting "somewhere at sea", came to be known as the Atlantic Charter.

Declaration by United Nations

On 1 January 1942, the representatives of 26 nations that were fighting against the Axis proclaimed their support for the Atlantic Charter by signing the "Declaration by United Nations". This document marked the first official use of the term "United Nations", which was suggested by President Roosevelt.

Moscow and Teheran Conferences

In a declaration signed in Moscow on 30 October 1943, the Governments of the USSR, UK, US and China called for an early establishment of an international organization to maintain peace and security. That goal was reaffirmed at the meeting of the leaders of the US, USSR and UK at Teheran on 1 December 1943.

Dumbarton Oaks Conference

The first blueprint of the UN was prepared at a conference held at a mansion known as Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, D.C. During two phases of meetings which ran from 21 September through 7 October 1944, the representatives of the USSR, UK, US and China agreed on the aims, structure and functioning of a world organization.

Yalta Conference

On 11 February 1945, following their meetings at Yalta, President Roosevelt, Prime Minister Churchill and Premier Stalin declared their resolve to establish "a general international organization to maintain peace and security".

San Francisco Conference

On 25 April 1945, delegates of 50 nations met in San Francisco for the conference known officially as the United Nations Conference on International Organization. The delegates drew up the 111-Article Charter which was adopted unanimously on 25 June 1945. The next day they signed it in the auditorium of the Veterans' Memorial Hall.

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The Milestones

24 October 1945
United Nations is created as its Charter is ratified by the five permanent members of the Security Council and the majority of other signatories and comes into force.

10 January 1946
First General Assembly, with full membership of 51 nations represented, opens in Central Hall, Westminster, London

17 January 1946
Security Council meets for the first time in Westminster, London, adopting its rules of procedure.

24 January 1946
General Assembly adopts its first resolution. Its main focus: peaceful uses of atomic energy and the elimination of atomic and other weapons of mass destruction.

1 February 1946
Trygve Lie of Norway becomes first Secretary-General

June 1948
First UN observer mission established in Palestine. the UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO).

10 December 1948
General Assembly adopts Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

7 January 1949
A UN envoy, Dr. Ralph Bunche, secures cease-fire between the new state of Israel and Arab states.

24 October 1949
Cornerstone laid for present UN Headquarters in New York City.

27 June 1950
Security Council, acting in the absence of the Soviet Union, calls on Member States to help southern part of Korea repel invasion from the north.

27 July 1953
Korean Armistice Agreement is signed by the UN Command and the Chinese-North Korean Command.

6 November 1956
First Emergency Special Session of the General Assembly meets on the Suez Canal crisis, establishing the first UN peace-keeping force, the UN Emergency Force (UNEF).

September 1960
17 newly independent states, 16 of them African, join the United Nations, the biggest increase in membership in any one year.

18 September 1961
Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold dies in an air crash while on mission to Congo

7 August 1963
Security Council votes voluntary arms embargo against South Africa.

4 March 1964
Security Council approves dispatch of peacekeeping force to Cyprus.

27 October 1966
General Assembly strips South Africa of its mandate to govern South-West Africa (Namibia)

16 December 1966
Mandatory sanctions are imposed against Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) by the Security Council.

23 November 1967
After the Six-Day War, the Security Council adopts resolution 242, the basis for future negotiations aimed at achieving peace in the Middle East.

12 June 1968
General Assembly approves Treaty on Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons and calls for ratification.

13 March 1969
Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination comes into force.

25 October 1971
General Assembly seats representatives of the People's Republic of China

June 1972
First UN Environment Conference is held in Stockholm, leading to the establishment of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) headquartered in Nairobi.

13 November 1974
General Assembly recognizes the Palestine Liberation Organization as "the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people."

June-July 1975
International Women's Year is marked by conference in Mexico City.

4 November 1977
Security Council adopts mandatory arms embargo against South Africa.

May-June 1978
General Assembly convenes special session, for the first time on disarmament.

18 December 1979
General Assembly adopts a Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, covering political, economic, social, cultural and civic values.

8 May 1980

Three years after the last case was reported, World Health Organization officially declares smallpox eradicated.

25 November 1981

General Assembly adopts Declaration on Elimination of All forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief.

10 December 1982

New United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea is signed by 117 States and two entities, the largest number of signatures ever affixed to a treaty on its first day.

December 1984

Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar sets up Office for Emergency Operations in Africa to help coordinate famine relief efforts.

10 December 1984

General Assembly adopts a Convention Against Torture.

July 1985

Thousands meet in Nairobi for closing conference on UN Decade for Women

September 1987

Efforts of UN Environment Programme (UNEP) lead to the signing of a Treaty on the Protection of the Ozone Layer, known as the Montreal Protocol, the first global environment protection agreement.

April 1989

UN Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) is deployed throughout Namibia to monitor South Africa's withdrawal and provide electoral assistance; Namibia becomes an independent country four months later.

2 September 1990

Convention on the Rights of the Child comes into force.

30 September 1990

UNICEF convenes World Summit for Children with 71 heads of state/government which adopts Plan of Action.

31 May 1991

A cease-fire in the 16-year civil war in Angola is negotiated, then administered by UN Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM).

31 December 1991

Agreement signed at UN Headquarters through the good offices of the Secretary-General between the Government of El Salvador and FMLN (national liberation front) leads to a cease-fire and peace accord after a 10-year war.

31 January 1992

Security Council holds its first ever meeting at the level of heads of state and government.

June 1992

The UN Conference on Environment and Development, the "Earth Summit", is held in Rio de Janeiro attended by 104 heads of state or government and other leaders, the largest intergovernmental gathering in history, resulting in Agenda 21, a plan of action for sustain-able development.

17 June 1992

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali issues "An Agenda for Peace" on preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peace-keeping and peace-building.

May 1993

The United Nations Observer Mission to Verify the Referendum in Eritrea contributes to the declaration of Eritrean independence and the country's admission to the United Nations. UN-supervised elections in Cambodia lead to the drafting of a new constitution and the establishment of the new government, ending nearly 15 years of strife in the war-torn country.

June 1993

World Conference on Human Rights is held in Vienna, during the International Year for Indigenous Peoples.

6 May 1994

In response to the request of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General produces a report on "An Agenda for Development", a blueprint for improving the human condition.

12 September 1994

The United Nations International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo adopts a landmark Programme of Action.

March 1995

The Social Summit, the largest gathering of world leaders in history, meets to renew the commitment to resolving poverty, unemployment and social exclusion.

September 1995

The Fourth World Conference on Women meets in Beijing to focus on persistent problems common to women from all parts of the globe.